6/27/72

Dear Howard,

By the time you get thus you will have made your decision, so you know this letter is not addressed to that. Rather it is intended as a contribution toward your education and a confession of minor error that Lil called to my attention. It is true that in some ways I am my worst enemy, one of Sylvia's accusations. It is also true that with a small part of the press I do not enjoy a good reputation. What Sylvia didn't address is why. I ignore the share of the responsibility for this that is hers and that of other critics. My personal connections wit the press are not that great and where I have any they are and have been good. For example, middle-grade news executives of NBC, whichhas refused to mention my name from the time Whitewash appeared and withoht any prior contact with NBC, arranged for staff counsel to see if he could help me with suits. But the real reason is that you can't fight and have those with whom you fight love you for it. The more they are wrong, the more they become persuaded they are wrong, the worse you come out in their minds. You had better learn this young.

Lil's point is I am my own worst enemy by trusting everyone. You said it in a different way. I guess I have to admit this is legitimate. I also believe it is the right way for one fighting the fight I do to fight, to seek help wherever it may be obtained.

On the other hand, assume that the press has a high regard for Sylvia. Show me what good it has done-anywhere,anythime.

Not frequently, but more than any other critic, I do hear from the press. Twice yesterday from California, once to do a talk show. You have been here when I've been in touch with some and can with them make your own evaluation. And why do you think Graham called me instead of Sylvia, who he knows? Can it be because he has more respect for Sylvia, because he considered it was her he had to fear in the dirtywork he was up to?

You don't find streetwalks carrying picket signs proclaiming the beauty of marrigge.

I fight vigorously, fast, sometimes pe haps unwisely. But those with whom I fight and boycott me also boycott the subject, not me, and their animosity toward me is not becuse of me or the way I fight (witness, next time you are here, the Post file, where I have been pretty rough on them-they still answer) but because of what I stand for, the fact that I do fight, and they are ashamed.

Lil and I were in Washington last Wednesday. A Washington correspondent you do not know took us to lunch. Last time I was in Knoxville, when the edior of the paper couldn't see me, he sent the assistant city editor. Last time he took off a morning and spent it with me. That time the editor of seven country weeklies took me and Jerry Ray wit me! to dinner, driving 60 miles for it. The competition has one of the best by-line writers in the state, also a member of the city council. He has wanted to me to stay over to talk to me every time I've seen Ray. There are a number of reporters who regularly consult their morgues for me. In New Orleans, where the papers are opposed to Garrison and to any handling of the subject, one editor took me to lunch, took me to the librarian afterward, and told him to let me have anything in the morgue I want. It contonues. WDSU, which refused to haave anything to do with Garrison, GAVE me their Oswald footage. WWL, ditto on hatred of Garrison, had a special preview of theirs for me. As I think I've bragged, on my November-December trip I didn't seek out any of the press, but those that found me interviewed me. WBAP-TV aired me from Dealey Plaza, on their initiative. Carlos Marcello's, Clay Shaw's and gangsters' lawyers talked to me, as did the man to be appointed special prosecutor in the State case against Garrison in N.O. I opened up two archives in Dallas that nobody else could have. Henry Wade saw me four times, twice in one day, drove me around in his car (with his new driver Beck the man who was to have driven the Oswald car on the move), and let me go through his entire Ruby file, unwatched. Dean Storey saw me twice and offered me his files. Mary was supposed to have gone through both as my private secretary but hasn't.

I could carry this on at greater length. This is off the top of my head. The point I'm making is that if you are going to fight and beat the shit out of your opponent, you can't expect him to wind up loving you. But he can and often does respect you for it. And in my case, behind-the-scenes help is not the exception but the rule. Even at the NYTimes, when I called at the time of Attica, one man spent two hours listening. Not on the national desk. On the other hand, Roberts spent much time slaving his own conscience with Jerry. It made Jerry feel great. But he has not come up with his notes, told Jerry nothing, and nothing good came of it. Sylvia wrote them after Belin's piece. So? They love her and hate me. What good did it do? At the time of the Times' second investigation, despite this alleged hatred

of me and on an extraordinarily busy day (they'd just fired their famous critic Kauffman), Harrison Salisbury saw me. This is what led to their second investigation. It was sabotaged from the inside, largely by Roberts (who prospered for it). Sylvia was in New York, not I, and she did nothing to forestall this. Tom Wicker tried several time and several way to help get Whitewash published (and learned his lesson from his inability, too). Several correspondents tried to get me published, here and in three or four foreign countries: England, France, Germany and Japan, four. All are famous correspondents.

So Sylvia gets published in the Texas Observer. Big deal. She feels great and thinks she is loved and i n the end what does it do her or us? More trouble, no better. And the Times prints Belin and she writes. They lover her. But what good did it do? Salisbury had enough respect for me not to send me the kind of crappy letter he sent her.

Despite what she says, I have never had a bad press in my own name and right. It is the subject and my irreconcilable position. You are familiar with the critical writing. What could Roberts say about me, for example? Or Gavzer and Moody? And despite that fight, AP did dig up the Altgens picture for me and on my regular pushing. I have acess to their pictures and UPI's. I don't think Syvlia even tried. UPI declassified the Nix and Moorman pictures for me. I went to LIFE on their invitation last time I was in NY and saw pictures they freely told me nobody but the FBI had seen. They had refused Bud. I have gotten from UPI every picture I've ever asked for, and they've gone into their basement looking for those I insistend they had and they said they didn't-and come back with them. After all the harsh fighting, UPI asked me to do a commemorative story, not Sylvia, Mark, Garrison or Epstein. They put it on the wire as their only assassination commemoration that year. That papers didn't carry it had nothing to do with me but the subject. My point here is dual: the subject remains a taboo and there is respect for me, despite my fighting. Perhaps because of it. These are off the top of my head. I am sure there are many more cases.

Aside from the fact that I fight, there is animosity because I proved everyone wrong when I invented the underground book and made a success of it. Yet you should have been with me on t e fifth at the Booksellers' convention. There was no single snide remark, many people looked me up, many spoke to me and introduced me to others. I am remembered in that area with respect, too. Even the pr sident of the Times' publishing subsidiary, Quadrangle, Mel Brisk, spent some time with me and reminisced about his mistake in judgement in not doing WW. The man who was public-relations director for Viking when they did Epstein spent some time with me. It may never happen, but he says he is coming here. He didn't have to talk to me or say that. And I did have a fight with him. But he also remembers that I helped himwith Epstein when Epstein wouldn't, without having read Epstein's book. I could go on and one. My point is that while I don't think you are going to want to or have to get into the kind of fight I have. learn a lesso for life. You may at some point have the decision to make. If you fight and fight with vigor, whether or not in all cases wisely, don t expect to be loved by those you fight, whether or not you come out respected. (And on this subject of respect, when Harwood and Bradlee see me in the Post, as they do, they do not ignore me, do not tell others to have nothing to do with me, and are at least polite if not also, as has happened, also friendly).

As to the way I fight, and the offbeat things I do. You heard one tape that tells you something in one area. Liebeler and Nizer fell silent and stayed that way. Who else did these things? When one fights, one has an objective. I fight for mine, not Sylvia's or Jerry's, as you know.

There have been ways of getting a good press on this subject. Tink's. He condemned all t e others, which includes Sylvia. In a book that save for error was completely stoleen, in his appearances he pretended he was above all critics and roundly condemned them when h didn't ridicule them. This is the man Sylvia likes and respects. He has even gone so far as to discourage others from any work, another basis for decent respect? That way is not for me. I don't think it is for you. Let it be for Sylvia, who had to know the real source of every single citation in Tink's book to "according to a document recently discovered in the Archives". Purity is in the twisted mind of the conceiver. I am not encouraging you to fight as I have. Rather I recommend against it or even fighting at all. One lightening rod is enough. But as youmature, learn the consequences and be aware of the cost. As a generality, there is no way of not paying it. Hastily,